Amendments To Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (currently amended) A data processing method for converting loyalty points stored in a loyalty account of a participant, wherein said loyalty account is associated with said participant within a loyalty program database system, comprising the computer-implemented steps of:

communicating with said participant using a computerized user interface system configured for exchanging information over a computerized network;

retrieving information from said loyalty program database, including an amount of said loyalty points accumulated by said participant;

converting said amount of said loyalty points to a currency value using a computerized conversion processor; and

applying said currency value as a credit to a financial account ~~of said participant~~, wherein said financial account is stored on a second database system, and wherein said currency value is applied to offset an executed charge.

Claim 2 (canceled)

3.   (currently amended) The method of claim 1, ~~wherein said step of applying said currency value as a credit comprises~~ further comprising the step of applying ~~said~~ a currency value as a credit to at least one of a financial transaction account of a third party, a stored value account of a third party and an online digital wallet account of a third party.

4.   (currently amended) The method of claim 1, ~~wherein said step of applying said currency value as a credit comprises~~ further comprising the step of applying ~~said~~ a currency value as a credit to at least one of a gift product~~;~~ and a secondary transaction number.

5.   (currently amended) A computer-implemented method for using loyalty points over a computerized network, comprising the steps of:

communicating with a participant over a computerized network using a computerized user interface system;

retrieving information, including an amount of loyalty points associated with said participant, from a loyalty account of said participant, wherein said loyalty account is associated with said participant within a loyalty program database system; and

converting said loyalty points to a currency value using a computerized conversion processor; and

applying said currency value as a credit to a financial account of said participant, wherein said financial account is stored on a second database system, and wherein said currency value is applied to offset an executed charge.

6.   (previously presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 5, wherein said step of applying said currency value as a credit comprises applying said currency value as a credit to said financial account of said participant.

7.   (currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 5, ~~wherein said step of applying said currency value as a credit comprises~~ further comprising the step of applying a ~~said~~ currency value as a credit to at least one financial transaction account of a third party, a stored value account of a third party and an online digital wallet account of a third party.

8.   (currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 5, ~~wherein said step of applying said currency value as a credit comprises~~ further comprising the step of applying ~~said~~ a currency value as a credit to at least one of a gift product and a secondary transaction number.

9.   (previously presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 5, wherein said step of communicating with said participant comprises communicating with said participant over a wire-based network.

10.   (previously presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 5, wherein said step of communicating with said participant comprises communicating with said participant over a wireless network.

11.   (previously presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 5, further comprising the steps of:

registering said participant to use a loyalty program, wherein said loyalty program comprises said loyalty program database system;

establishing said loyalty account for said participant, wherein said loyalty account information is stored within said loyalty program database system; and

authenticating said participant to use said loyalty program.

12.   (previously presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 5, wherein said step of retrieving information from a loyalty program operated by a third party.

13.   (original) The computer-implemented method of claim 6, further comprising the steps of:

integrating a computerized shopping network to facilitate a transaction between said participant and at least one merchant, wherein said shopping network is configured to offer for sale to said participant, over said computerized network, a variety of products or services; and

receiving, from said participant, a request to use said loyalty points to facilitate said transaction with said at least one merchant.

14.   (original) The computer-implemented method of claim 13, further comprising the steps of:

receiving transaction details relating to said transaction, said transaction details comprising at least an amount of said transaction; and

receiving, from said participant, information relating to said financial transaction account to be used to complete said transaction, said financial transaction account information comprising at least an account number identifying said financial transaction account.

15.   (previously presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 14, further comprising the steps of:

invoking a computerized process to verify that said loyalty account has sufficient loyalty points to cover an amount of said transaction;

invoking a computerized process to verify that said financial transaction account has a sufficient credit limit to cover said amount of said transaction; and

approving said transaction when said loyalty points and said credit limit are sufficient; whereupon a confirmation of said transaction is sent to said participant.

16.   (previously presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 14, further comprising the step of:

invoking a computerized process to verify that the combined available balance of said loyalty account and said transaction account covers the amount of said transaction; whereupon, when said combined available balance is sufficient, said transaction is approved and a message is returned to said participant confirming said transaction.

17.   (original) The computer-implemented method of claim 14, comprising the further step of posting a charge associated with said transaction to said financial transaction account.

18.   (previously presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 17, comprising the additional step of generating a billing statement for said financial transaction account reflecting said posted charge and said applied credit.

19.   (currently amended) A data processing and host server system, including at least one application program and a plurality of databases, configured to facilitate a conversion of loyalty points stored in a loyalty account, wherein said loyalty account is associated with a participant within a loyalty program database system, comprising:

a computerized account manager user interface system configured to accept communication from said participant over a computerized network;

a computerized account manager loyalty system middleware coupled to said computerized user interface system configured to interface with a loyalty program database system to access and retrieve information, including accumulated loyalty points, from said loyalty account; and

a computerized account manager conversion processor configured to convert said loyalty points to a currency value and to facilitate the application of said currency value as a credit to a

financial account of said participant, wherein said financial account is stored on a second database system, and wherein said credit is applied to offset an executed charge.

20. (original) The system of claim 19, further comprising:

a computerized interface between said account manager user interface system and a third party shopping network, wherein said third party shopping network facilitates a value transaction between merchants and said participants.

21. (currently amended) The system of claim 19, further comprising:

a computerized shopping network configured to interface with said participant and at least one merchant to facilitate a value transaction, wherein said shopping network is programmed to:

(1) offer products for sale to said participant;

(2) provide said participant with an option to convert loyalty points to said currency value credit to offset the purchase of a product;

(3) process a request from said participant to purchase said product using said converted loyalty points;

(4) receive a designated financial transaction account of said participant to be used to facilitate said transaction; and,

(5) transmit transaction details to said computerized loyalty system middleware to facilitate said value transaction using said converted loyalty points.

22. (original) The system of claim 21, wherein said middleware is further configured to interface with a financial transaction system to post a transaction charge to said designated financial transaction account and to post said applied credit to said designated financial transaction account.

23. (previously presented) A computerized method for converting loyalty points to a currency credit to facilitate a transaction while shopping online, comprising the steps of:

presenting a searchable online catalog of products or services to a loyalty program participant;

receiving participant's selection of at least one product to purchase from said online catalog, wherein said participant chooses to pay with loyalty points;

retrieving loyalty point information from participant's loyalty account;

invoking a conversion processor to calculate the number of said loyalty points necessary to make the purchase;

confirming that said participant has sufficient loyalty points to complete the purchase;

retrieving information from a participant's financial transaction account;

converting said loyalty points to a currency credit; and

posting said currency credit to said financial transaction account, wherein said currency credit is applied to offset an executed charge.

24.   (currently amended) A computer-implemented method for using loyalty points, comprising the steps of:

interfacing with a loyalty program participant through a user interface system, comprising the further steps of:

(1) authenticating said participant to verify that said participant is authorized to use a loyalty program and to identify participant's loyalty account;

(2) receiving from said participant, a request to use loyalty points to facilitate a transaction and information identifying a participant's financial transaction account;

retrieving from said loyalty account, information which includes at least the number of loyalty points available;

invoking a conversion processor to convert a designated amount of loyalty points to a currency credit;

posting said currency credit to said participant's financial transaction account, wherein said credit is posted to offset an executed charge; and

debiting said designated amount of loyalty points from said loyalty account.

25.   (original) The method of claim 24, wherein said interfacing step occurs online.

26.   (original) The method of claim 24, wherein said interfacing step occurs using a wireless-enabled communication device.

27. (original) The method of claim 24, further comprising the step of configuring a user interface system to facilitate said transaction with a shopping network.

28. (previously presented) The method of claim 24, wherein said step of invoking a conversion processor comprises invoking, by said conversion processor, a pre-defined conversion ratio depending on at least one of a merchant status and a participant status.

29. (original) The method of claim 24, further comprising the steps of:
receiving transaction details relating to said transaction; and
comparing said transaction details to said loyalty account information and said financial transaction account to determine if transaction is authorized.

30. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein said receiving step comprises:
receiving transaction details from a merchant.

31. (previously presented) The method of claim 29, wherein said receiving step comprises:
receiving transaction details from said participant.

32. (previously presented) The method of claim 24, further comprising the step of gifting a gift product.

33. (currently amended) A computer-implemented method for facilitating a transaction using loyalty points, comprising the steps of:
registering with an account manager to participate in a loyalty program;
providing authenticating information to an account manager in order to cause said account manager to verify that a participant is authorized to access said loyalty program;
selecting to redeem loyalty points associated with a loyalty account to facilitate a transaction, wherein said selection causes said loyalty points to be retrieved from said loyalty account and converted to a currency credit, wherein said loyalty points are deducted from said loyalty account balance and posted to a financial account of said participant to offset an executed charge.

34.   (original) A method of claim 33, wherein at least one of the steps occur online.

35.   (original) A method of claim 33, wherein at least one of the steps are facilitated with a wireless-enabled communication device.

36.   (previously presented) The method of claim 34, further comprising the steps of:

        browsing a merchant's online web site for merchandise;

        selecting a product to purchase using loyalty points by selecting an appropriate icon;

        designating said participant's financial transaction account to be associated with said loyalty program, wherein said currency credit is posted to said financial transaction account.

37.   (currently amended) A method for facilitating a transaction using loyalty points associated with a secondary transaction number, comprising the steps of:

        registering a participant to participate in a loyalty program;

        establishing a loyalty account associated with said participant;

        receiving a request from said participant to use loyalty points from said loyalty account ~~to facilitate a transaction using a secondary transaction number~~;

        retrieving loyalty account information associated with said participant;

        invoking a conversion processor to convert said loyalty points to a currency credit;

        generating ~~a~~ said secondary transaction number with ~~a~~ an associated credit limit of up to said currency credit; wherein said secondary transaction number is configured in the same format as existing transaction charge cards so as to be accepted by existing transaction card authorization and settlement processing systems;

        providing said secondary transaction number to said participant for use in facilitating said transaction;

        posting said currency credit to a financial account of said participant to offset an executed charge; and

        updating said loyalty account by reducing balance by the amount of said converted loyalty points.

38.   (currently amended) An account manager system for facilitating a transaction within a shopping network using loyalty points, comprising:

at least one user interface system configured to facilitate communication with a shopping network and loyalty program participants, said shopping network comprising at least one merchant, wherein said shopping network is configured to provide to said participants a catalog of goods and services offered by said at least one merchant and operative to permit said participants to select goods and services from said catalog and to submit a request to obtain said goods and services in exchange for loyalty points;

a loyalty program system comprising at least a first computerized database system for managing loyalty program accounts;

a financial transaction account system comprising at least a second computerized database system for managing financial transaction accounts of said participants;

a conversion system for converting loyalty points to a currency value credit; and a loyalty program middleware system configured to invoke said conversion system, to receive transaction details from said at least one user interface system, and to facilitate the exchange of account data and currency values between said loyalty program accounts and said financial transaction accounts, wherein said currency value is exchanged to offset an executed charge.

39.   (original) The system of claim 38, the financial transaction account system further comprising:

a financial capture system configured to capture and process transaction details;

an accounts receivable system configured to post transaction card charges and loyalty point credits to said transaction card accounts.

40.   (original) The system of claim 38, the transaction card system further comprising:

a charge authorization system configured to compare said transaction details with participants' transaction card accounts and participants' loyalty program accounts, wherein said charge authorization system verifies that participants' have sufficient loyalty points and credit limit.

41.   (original) The system of claim 38, the conversion system further comprising:

at least a third computerized database system of conversion ratios, wherein said conversion ratios vary according to merchant or participant status;

a conversion processor for converting loyalty points to loyalty currency credit using said conversion ratio that is appropriate for the particular participant or merchant.